Visa and eVisa:
rationale, specifications and reflections on future trends

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Structure of Presentation

1. Visa and its purposes
2. Evolution of a Visa: towards ICAO Document 9303
3. eVisa: state of play, pros and cons
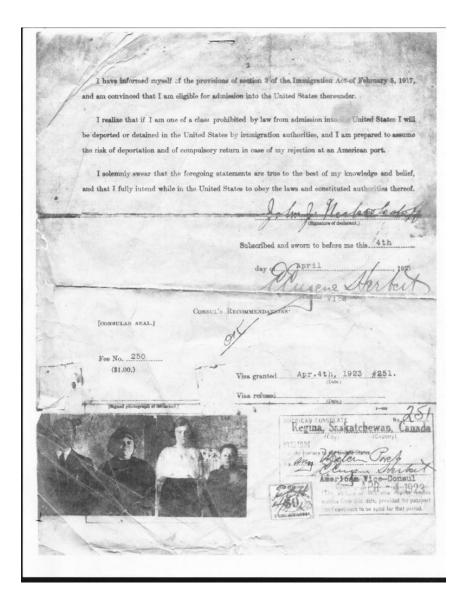4. Conclusions

Visa

- Translation „Visa" = „has been seen"

- Visa is an authorisation for a person *to travel* to the state for which it was issued, and apply for admission at the port of entry

- NB: authorisation to travel to the country – not to enter!

Common purposes of a Visa

- Protect the receiving State and society
- Protect the traveller
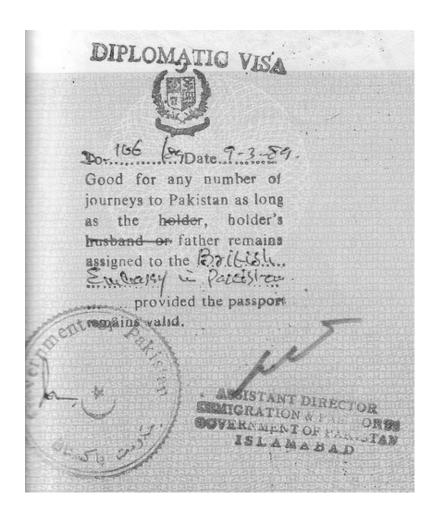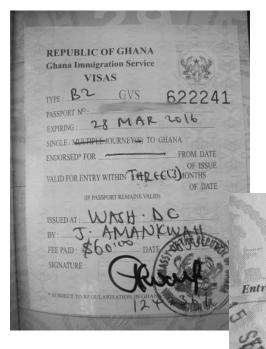- Revenue generation – visa fees

Visa evolution: stamp 1920-40s

Visa evolution: stamp - today

Visa evolution: stamp multi-colour

Visa evolution: sticker

Common features so far

- No interoperability
- Not machine-readable
- Security weaknesses
- Non ICAO-compliant

SOLUTION:

- ICAO MRV Specifications (Doc 9303 Part 2)

Doc 9303 Part 2 – MR Visa

ICAO Visa specifications – not a Standard but a recommended practice

States encouraged to use it – but no legal obligation

Two MRV formats:

- Format A Visa, and
- Format B Visa

Visa (MRV-A):
Doc 9303 Part 2

MRV-A: Zone boundaries: Doc 9303 Part 2

MRV-A: Machine-readable zone: Doc 9303 Part 2

country code

document type

primary & secondary identifiers (names)

filler characters

passport or visa number

nationality

sex

optional data

date of birth

date of expiry

check digits

MRV-B Visa: Doc 9303 Part 2

UTOPIA   VISA

Place of Issue/ Lieu de deliverence	Valid from/ Valide a partir de Valid until/ Valide jusqu'au
ZENITH	10DEC 91 10DEC 96

No. of Entries/ Nombre d'entrees   Document No./ Numero de document

MULTIPLE   M123889546

Type/Type

BUSINESS   MULTIPLE

Surname/Nom   Given names/Prenoms

ERIKSSON   JOHN ARTHUR

Passport Number   Sex   Date of Birth   Nationality
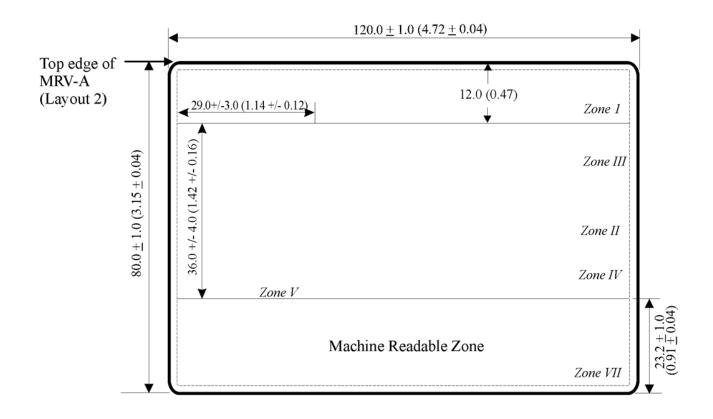
L898901C   M/M   07SEP 40   XXX
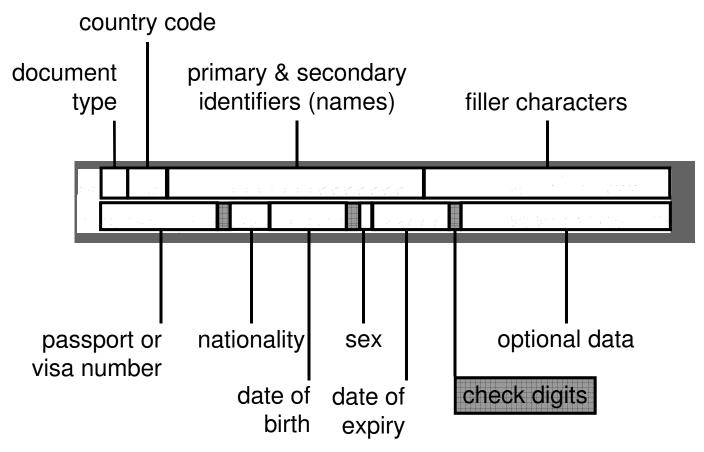
Issuing Officer

John Doe

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V<UTOERIKSSON<<JOHN<ARTHUR<<<<<<<<<<
L898901C<6XXX4009072M9612109<<<<<<<<
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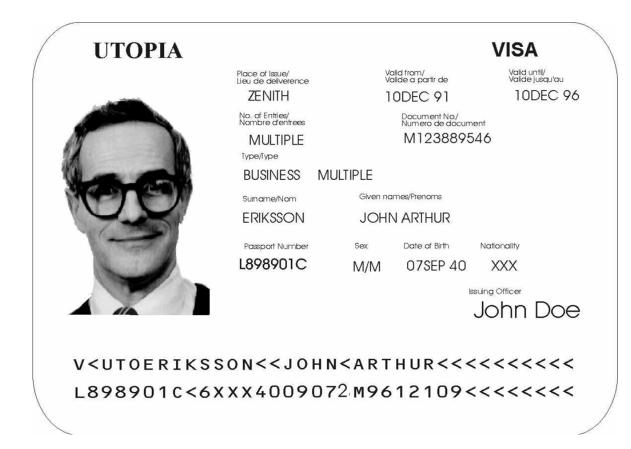74mm

105mm

MRV-B Zone boundaries: Doc 9303 Part 2

MRV-B: Machine-readable zone: Doc 9303 Part 2

country code

document type

primary & secondary identifiers (names)

filler characters

passport or visa number

nationality

sex

optional data

date of birth
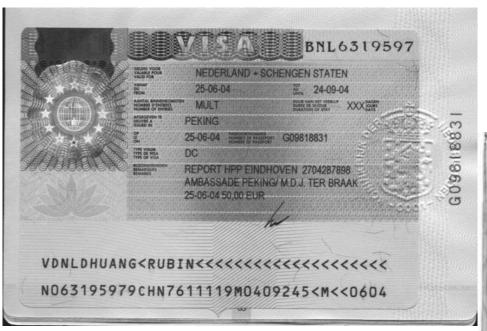
date of expiry

check digits

MRV-A samples

MRV-B samples

Facial image: optional but strongly recommended

What is an eVisa?

An electronic visa, or eVisa

* a paperless substitute for a traditional visa, one which can be obtained by a traveller directly online through the internet, a travel agent, tour operator or participating air carrier at the time of making a travel reservation.

How does an eVisa work?

- Application and visa fee payment made online

- Application processed and issued online, no visa sticker

- Identity and eVisa status checked by the carrier

- Upon arrival identity and eVisa status is checked and the holder admitted into the country

eVisas: state of play

- In effect: Australia (1996, the pioneer), Armenia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia (the Hajj eVisa), Cambodia, United States (ESTA Visa Waiver)

- Under development in a number of states

- Many other states been considering introducing it but cost high for a "stand alone" system, especially for developing countries

- "Community" interest in Africa (CEMAC, ECOWAS, SADC, UEMOA), Asia (ASEAN), South America

Advantages of an eVisa

- First and foremost --- increased security

- Lower processing and issuance costs for States

- Convenience and savings to Travellers

- To airlines – quicker checks and lower fines

- Fee collection is corruption-proof

- Paperless process – environment friendly

Particularly beneficial for States that have limited number of visa-issuing missions abroad --- and travellers to those countries

Limitations of an eVisa

- May not work for high-risk nationals or special visas – where an interview is likely to be required

- Requires reliable infrastructure – stable electricity and communications

- No international specifications, best practices or policies yet

eVisa: current situation

- Emerging need for a globally interoperable e-Visa system that could be used by many countries, individually or jointly

- Currently there exist neither global standards nor specifications for eVisas

- States tend to launch a tender and select a proposal without any standard process to follow or test of robustness (and there have been problems)

- The prospect of fragmentation, inconsistency and potential weakness in specifications and processes is rising

New developments: the way forward

- ICAO 37th Assembly (2010) supported UNWTO proposal that "ICAO should explore with international partners the development of global standards and specifications for eVisas as a matter of priority"

- A37 WP/136 http://www.icao.int/icao/en/assembl/a37/wp/wp136_en.pd

- The ICAO Secretariat will request the NTWG

  - to add eVisa specifications to its work programme

  - to submit a status of work report to the TAG/MRTD in September 2011 - and propose a roadmap for developing universal eVisa spec

The Vision:

- Producing ICAO international eVisa specifications – as requested by States - building on the foundation of existing ICAO MRTD initiatives

- ICAO offering States a "one stop shop" for technical advice on eVisa implementation and system maintenance

Considering an eVisa system for your State?
Need ICAO to develop global eVisa specifications?

☀ Please let the ICAO MRTD Programme know – your voice and expectations matter!

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☀ Joint efforts and coordination make it easier to identify technical expertise and IT solutions that may be needed

Conclusions

Two main trends

1. States increasingly switching to ICAO MRV specifications

2. Growing number of eVisa programmes – and increasing interest globally

The traditional visa issuance procedure at the Consulate changed little since the 1920s – time has come to explore the potential of modern IT and communications -- for enhancing security and facilitation

Conclusions contd.

- Visa is a process of risk assessment – a sticker or eVisa issued is just the proof

- The foundation is a sound Visa policy – then the best technical solution can be found (ICAO MRV or eVisa)

- An effective eVisa system is to enhance *both* security and facilitation

- Need for globally interoperable eVisa specifications – options being explored by ICAO

THANK YOU!

Questions? Comments? Feedback?

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